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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000478

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020  
TAGS: AF PREL UN  
SUBJECT: UN SRSG: ELECTIONS PREPARATIONS BEHIND

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Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Recently returned from the London Conference, SRSG Eide led an upbeat meeting of ambassadors of major JCMBou arned, however, that both the UN and GIRoA were "much further along" at this stage in preparations in 2009 and that their relative progress this time is lagging significantly. He blamed the delays in part on the lack of clarity on the role of the ECC vis a vis the IEC, and especially the outstanding question on whether the proposed international candidates for the ECC would be accepted by Karzai.

¶4. (C) The EUSR and EC representatives both expressed doubts that the elections could take place on schedule and urged the UN to take the lead on organizing the international community to provide the support needed for a successful election. Eide said that he is actively pushing GIRoA to make decisions on the respective roles of the IEC and ECC and to push for an accelerated preparation schedule. Saying that we "barely made it last time" with a longer preparation schedule, Eide blamed the slow decision making and hesitation at the presidential palace for the delays. Deputy SRSG Watkins said the operational side of preparations was being held "hostage" to the political discussions swirling around the election and that these operational limitations were becoming even more dire as time ticks on.

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Reform: Mission Impossible?  
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¶5. The international community remains skittish about committing money to another Afghan election when needed reforms to the electoral system remain addressed, as Eide admitted. The French ambassador and British charge

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d'affaires both stated their concern that discussion on reform needs to take place soon, as budgets are being drawn. Ambassador Eikenberry expressed hope that reform can be brought about through a consensus decision by GIRoA in cooperation with the international community. He said that Afghan domestic politics, not the international community, ideally should drive reform. GIRoA already showed its ability to reach consensus when they made the decision to postpone the election, he said. Eide agreed, and said he hoped that attention could turn to reform now that the issue of the election date has been settled.

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Calls for International Unity

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¶ 6. (C) With former British Ambassador Mark Sedwill due to arrive in a matter of days to assume his new position as NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, the group discussed how to better coordinate international efforts in the months to come. Afghanistan is "positioned to have a good year," Ambassador Eikenberry said, and he called for transparency among international actors on their initiatives, conferences, and other efforts related to Afghanistan: the international community needs to have a "common road map" to ensure delivery on shared objectives.

¶ 7. (C) Ambassador Eikenberry suggested that international actors all need to collaborate in delivering timely aid to GIRoA in a fashion that allows for the best use of the money.

The NATO representative noted cash flow issues that stem from GIRoA's fiscal year beginning on March 21, followed by a two month moratorium on spending, and then a two-month lag before funding becomes available for spending. This schedule means that GIRoA is not ready to spend money until nearly the end of the U.S. fiscal year. Billions of dollars are in GIRoA's coffers but have not been spent. Several ambassadors urged the international community to work with GIRoA on budget prioritization and spending mechanisms. Ambassador Eikenberry noted that the health and education sectors have significant shortfalls that must be addressed by either GIRoA using unobligated funds or by international donors.

Eikenberry